



□ DISTRICT OFFICE

8703 3RD AVENUE
BROOKLYN, NY 11209
(718) 748-5200
FAX: (718) 748-5222

□ CITY HALL OFFICE

250 BROADWAY, ROOM 1728
NEW YORK, NY 10007
(212) 788-7363
FAX: (212) 442-5875

vgentile@council.nyc.gov

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK

VINCENT J. GENTILE

COUNCIL MEMBER, 43RD DISTRICT
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VETERANS

December 22, 2011

The Honorable Raymond Kelly
Police Commissioner
New York City Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

Dear Commissioner Kelly,

I read with interest the recent news stories of the NYPD sting against fencing operations involving stolen electronic equipment. While the goal is laudatory, especially in light of the increase in grand larcenies this year, the news articles I read led me to believe that this police operation was focused on the merchants selling the stolen goods, i.e. bodegas, newsstands, barbershops, etc. Indeed, one of the articles quoted you as saying, "That's our intention, to reduce the places where people who steal these things can go and sell them."

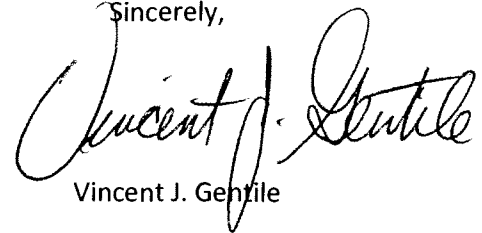
I write today because despite your intentions for the overall operation of rooting out the locations that sell these goods, it has come to my attention that the NYPD officers involved in this sting may have gone beyond the stated parameters. Rather than focus on the merchants and locations that peddle stolen merchandise, I have been alerted and alarmed over several known incidents of police officers, as part of the sting operation, openly soliciting people on the street by enticing them to buy the goods at a reduced price and then arresting the individual on the street if any negotiation or transaction transpired. Indeed, in one instance in my district, a young teenager with no criminal past was approached by an undercover as the teenager exited a local library. The teenager was not otherwise looking to buy anything but nonetheless was arrested as part of this sting when he offered the undercover some money because the undercover looked destitute and homeless. If accurate, this rendition of the actual rollout of "Operation Take Back" far exceeded the stated parameters of the sting operation reflected in your press statement.

Accordingly, I am requesting your review of the actual operation of this initiative by either NYPD special units or the individual precincts. Trying to root out merchants who are known dealers in stolen electronics is one matter; luring unsuspecting and otherwise law abiding teenagers to "buy" goods from undercover officers is another matter entirely. The former I believe is a proper police function and within the realm of your stated purposes of "Operation Take Back"; the latter is a picture of police personnel hell-bent on racking up arrest numbers regardless of the consequences to those who were approached and solicited on the

street. We both know that the Department is much better than the latter scenario suggests, and so I bring it to your attention for your review and for the reestablishment of the proper parameters of the operation.

I appreciate your prompt review in this matter and the interest in which you will view the issues raised. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Vincent J. Gentile". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Vincent" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Gentile".

Vincent J. Gentile

CC: Hon. Charles J. Hynes,
Kings County District Attorney